

C. Remarks

The claims are 1-8, with claim 1 being the sole independent claim.

Reconsideration of the present claims is expressly requested.

Claims 1-8 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as being allegedly anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 6,399,520 B1 (Kawakami). The grounds of rejection are respectfully traversed.

Prior to addressing the merits of rejection, Applicant would like to briefly review some of the key features and advantages of the present invention. That invention relates to a processing method for forming an insulated film on a surface of a substrate by an oxynitriding treatment. The treatment is conducted by first nitriding the surface of the substrate by irradiating plasma containing nitrogen atoms and then oxidizing the surface of the substrate, which has already been nitrided, by irradiating plasma containing oxygen atoms. As a result, a less defective silicon oxynitride film is formed.

Kawakami is directed to a method for forming gate insulators in semiconductor devices. Specifically, Kawakami teaches how to quickly form a silicon nitride film. To achieve this goal, Kawakami discloses:

- (1) plasma-nitriding a substrate and then depositing an nitride film;
- (2) plasma-nitriding the substrate and the plasma nitriding under different gas conditions; and
- (3) forming an oxide film and then plasma-nitriding the substrate.

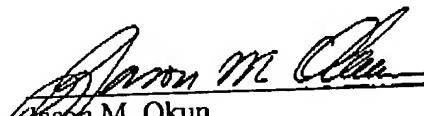
The Examiner has relied on claim 1 in Kawakami to reject the present claims. Applicant respectfully disagrees.

Kawakami's claim 1 is directed to the nitriding process in points (1) and (2) mentioned above. Kawakami teaches generating "plasma containing oxygen, or nitrogen, or oxygen and nitrogen" and "implementing with this oxidizing, nitriding, or oxy-nitriding directly on a surface of the substrate to be processed to deposit an insulator film." Clearly, this is not a disclosure of the presently claimed two-stage processing, i.e., plasma-nitriding a substrate and then plasma-oxidizing an already nitrided substrate. Applicant submits that such two-stage processing and/or its advantageous effects are neither disclosed nor suggested in Kawakami. Thus, Kawakami clearly cannot affect the patentability of the presently claimed invention.

Wherefore, Applicant respectfully requests that the outstanding rejection be withdrawn and that the present case be passed to issue.

Applicant's undersigned attorney may be reached in our New York office by telephone at (212) 218-2100. All correspondence should continue to be directed to our address given below.

Respectfully submitted,



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